

! (Where's the ban on imperative questions?)*

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Abstract This paper argues for a re-evaluation of the common assumption that imperatives cannot appear in (true information seeking) questions. This is challenged based on new data from Slovenian, which show that imperatives can occur in scope marking questions. It is proposed that instead of a categorical exclusion of imperative questions based on clause type, the ban on imperative questions is the result of a matrix clause version of subject obviation. The proposed analysis not only reduces the putative “ban on imperative questions” to another independent phenomenon, but also correctly predicts the behavior of imperatives in scope marking questions.

Keywords: imperatives, questions, performative modality, clause typing, binding restrictions, self-ascription, scope marking questions, control, attitude verbs, attitude operators

1 Imperative questions!?

It is often taken for granted that imperative questions are impossible, and that this is the reason why *constituent questions* like (1a) and *polar questions* like (1b) are infelicitous — imperatives are viewed as incompatible with interrogatives.¹

- (1) a. *What sell!?

This can be seen even more clearly in languages like Slovenian, which has a dedicated imperative suffix, as shown by the contrast between (2a) and (2b). In the infelicitous examples in (3) (paralleling those in (1)), we can thus clearly identify the imperative suffix co-occurring with a *wh*-word, as in (3a), or a question particle, as in (3b).²

- (2) a. Proda-**j**-te ga!
 sell-IMP-2PL 3.M.ACC
 ‘Sell it!’
 b. (A) Ga proda-te?
 Q 3.M.DAT sell-2PL
 ‘Will you_{PL} sell it?’

* I would like to thank Jonathan Bobaljik, Stefan Kaufmann, Peet Klecha, Susi Wurmbrand and especially Magda Kaufmann for discussion and feedback. All remaining errors are my own.

¹ I use 'interrogative' to refer narrowly to the clause type, and 'question' as a more general term.

2 The question particle 'a' ('ali' in higher registers) is optional in colloquial Slovenian. If dropped, polar questions are identified via intonation and the clitic cluster being in the 1st clausal position (as opposed to 2nd). For sake of simplicity, I will omit the particle from subsequent polar questions.

- (3) a. ***Kaj** prodaj-te?
 what sell-IMP-2PL
 int.: ‘What should you_{PL} sell?’
 b. *(**A**) Ga prodaj-te?
 Q 3.M.ACC sell-IMP-2PL
 int.: ‘Should you_{PL} sell it?’

Crucially, the infelicity does not result solely from the oddness of the intended meaning of sentences like (3a) and (3b), since it can be conveyed through alternative grammatical means. In Slovenian, the intended meaning of the imperative questions in (3) may be expressed with *modal+infinitive* constructions, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. Kaj mora-te prodati?
 what should-2PL sell.INF
 ‘What should you sell?’
 b. Ga mora-te prodati?
 3.M.ACC should-2PL sell.INF
 ‘Should you sell it?’

The “*ban on imperative questions*” must therefore be linked to unique properties of imperatives and questions, the null hypothesis being that the ban results directly from clause typing, specifically the idea that there are at least three core universal clause types — *declarative*, *interrogative*, and *imperative* — which are mutually exclusive (Sadock & Zwicky 1985), so any clause may only belong to one at a time. However, imperatives are actually felicitous in *echo questions* and *rhetorical questions* (Kaufmann & Poschmann 2013), so in order to maintain a simplistic clause type based explanation we would have to retreat to the position that only “true” information seeking questions belong to the interrogative clause type.

I will not attempt to square this position with the syntactic commonalities that information seeking questions share with echo and rhetorical questions. In fact, I will show that an even further retreat is necessary, as there is evidence from Slovenian that imperatives can be felicitous even in “true” information seeking questions, specifically in *scope marking questions* (see Dayal 1993, 2016). I will argue based on this fact that there is no “ban on imperative questions” per se, but that the badness of (1) and (3) stems from a binding violation that results from the requirement that imperatives (and more generally what I call *directive clauses/directives*) semantically and syntactically encode the perspective holder of the clause.

1.1 Scope marking questions

Following Dayal (1993, 2016), I assume that a sequence of questions like (5) constitutes a scope marking question. The intuition is that (5) is more parallel to a single bi-clausal question like (6b) than to a regular sequence of questions like (6a).

- (5) Q: What do you think? What should we buy?
 (6) a. Q: Where did you go? What did you buy?
 b. Q: What do you think (that) we should buy?

This grouping is substantiated by the respective canonical answers for (5) and (6a). The scope marking question in (5) can be answered the same way as (6b), with (7a), while (6a) can only get answers for each of the questions separately; see (7b).

- (7) a. **A:** I think we should buy cheese. (answer to: (6b) & (5))
 b. **A:** I went to the store. I bought cheese. (answer to: (6a))

Returning to the issue of imperative questions. In Slovenian, imperatives can be used felicitously in the second question of a scope marking question similar to (5).³ In a context like (8), there are two basic ways to ask for the relevant information. Due to the possibility of using imperatives in indirect speech in Slovenian (Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015: see also Section 2), one can use a bi-clausal question like (8a). The other option is to use a corresponding scope marking question like (8a').

- (8) CONTEXT: *Paula sends me to the liquor store to buy some drinks for her birthday party, and I go there with Marcin. By the time we get there, I've already forgotten what I'm supposed to buy, so I call Paula on the phone to ask her. After this Marcin, who didn't hear our phone call, can ask me:*
- a. **Kaj** je rekla, da kupi? (wh-extraction)
 what AUX.3 said.F that buy.IMP.(2)
 'What did she say you should buy?'
- a'. **Kaj** je rekla? **Kaj** kupi? (scope marking)
 what AUX.3 said.F what buy.IMP.(2)
 'What did she say? What should you buy?'

Both questions are genuinely information seeking and they are equivalent in the same way (5) and (6b) are equivalent. Importantly, the second question in (8a') is also an imperative; it is essentially identical to the infelicitous question in (3a) and thus constitutes a counterexample even to a weakened version of the "ban on imperative questions" that considers only information seeking questions.⁴

Not only is it clear from the context that (8a') is not an echo question, it can also be shown it differs syntactically from echo questions. In Slovenian, echo questions like those in (9a) allow the *wh*-word to stay in-situ (note also the characteristic stress), whereas *wh*-in-situ is impossible if the question asked in the context of (8).

- (9) a. **KAJ** je rekla? **Kupi** **KAJ**? (echo questions)
 what AUX.3 said.F buy.IMP.(2) what
 'WHAT did he say? You should buy WHAT?'

³ The main difference, apart from the imperative itself, is the attitude verb in the first question: 'say' vs. 'think', since imperatives must be used performatively, which requires them to be uttered.

⁴ In fact, already (8a) can be seen as a counterexample, as the *wh*-word originates from the embedded clause containing the imperative, which can be seen as making that clause simultaneously imperative and interrogative. However, the point is much clearer and stronger with (8a'), where the string of words in the relevant clause is identical to that of a corresponding infelicitous matrix question.

- b. #Kaj je rekla? Kupi kaj? (asked in relation to (8))
 what AUX.3 said.F buy.IMP.(2) what
 ‘What did he say? What should you buy?’

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I discuss the phenomenon of subject obviation in embedded directive clauses (i.e. imperatives and directive subjunctives) (Section 2.1) and argue that a parallel restriction also exists in matrix clauses and that it is actually responsible for the absence of imperatives in matrix questions (Section 2.2). In Section 3, I derive Generalized Subject Obviation as a syntactic binding restriction, which indirectly results from the requirement of the modal operator OP_{Dir} — the source of “directive semantics” — to combine with an expression of type e : a perspectival *PRO*. In Section 4, I return to scope marking questions and show that, when coupled with an analysis of them in terms of indirect dependency (Dayal 1993, 2016), my analysis of imperatives (and directives in general) correctly predicts them to be possible in scope marking questions.

2 Directive clauses and subject obviation

Two key characteristics of Slovenian imperatives will be crucial for the proposed analysis of imperative questions. Firstly, imperatives can be embedded as indirect speech in Slovenian, like in (10) (see Sheppard & Golden 2002; Rus 2005; Dvořák 2005; Dvořák & Zimmermann 2008; Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015; Stegovec 2016).

- (10) Rekel je, **da dela-j** bolje.
 said.M AUX.3 that work-IMP.(2) better
 ‘He said you should work better.’ (Sheppard & Golden 2002: 251)

Secondly, imperatives in Slovenian are in complementary distribution with what I call *directive subjunctives*, shown in (11), which have the same canonical function as imperatives (to be elaborated on below). I indicate this shared function by translating both into English with the modal ‘*should*’ as the closest equivalent.

- (11) Rekel je, **da naj** delam bolje.
 said.M AUX.3 that SUB work.1 better
 ‘He said I should work better.’

The complementary distribution of imperatives and directive subjunctives concerns the person value of the subject. Imperatives are used when the subject is 2P or 1P inclusive, while directive subjunctives are used with 3P and 1P exclusive subjects. Morpho-syntactically the two differ in that imperatives surface with dedicated verbal morphology (see above), whereas directive subjunctives are formed with an

indicative verb in the present tense and the particle ‘*naj*’,⁵ which does not inflect.

I will build here on previous work, where I argue that imperatives and directive subjunctives are essentially syntactically and semantically equivalent, and that their complementary distribution is only a surface phenomenon (see [Stegovec 2016](#) for details). What is crucial under this view is that the two form a natural class as *directive clauses* (or simply *directives*) (see (12)) by virtue of both having the same canonical function of initiating *Directive Speech Acts* as defined in (13).⁶

(12) ***Directive clause.***

A clause with the canonical function of a ‘Directive Speech Act’.

(13) ***Directive Speech Act.***

A speech act where the speaker attempts to make an individual or group of individuals ensure that the non-modal content of the utterance is realized.

I will argue that the crucial property of directives with respect to the issue of imperative questions is that both imperatives and directive subjunctives give rise to the phenomenon known as *subject obviation*. This is what I will turn to next.

2.1 A restriction on embedding — subject obviation

In Slovenian, imperatives and directive subjunctives show the same restriction on the possible referents of their subjects when embedded. The subject of the embedding matrix clause and the subject of the embedded subjunctive cannot co-refer, cf. (14).

- (14) Rekel je_i, da naj si pomag_{k,*i}!
 said.M AUX.3 that SUB self.DAT help.3
 ‘He_i said he_{k,*i} should help himself!’

This restriction is known as *subject obviation* (see, among others, [Picallo 1985](#); [Quer 2006](#)), a restriction most commonly associated with embedded subjunctives in Romance languages. However, in Slovenian, where imperatives may also be embedded, the same restriction can also be observed with imperatives.

This is shown in (15); an embedded imperative with a 2P singular subject is impossible when the matrix subject is also 2P singular. In other words, when the two subjects co-refer (see [Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015](#) for the original observation).⁷

5 This “subjunctive particle” also appears outside directive subjunctives, where it is not limited to 3P and 1P exclusive subjects. I assume that this is the result of under-specification of ‘*naj*’ (the vocabulary item). Crucially, only the directive use of ‘*naj*’ shows the properties discussed below.

6 The definition of Directive Speech Acts is roughly based on that from [Searle \(1976\)](#), but adapted so that the relevant individual or group of individuals may also not include the addressee.

7 Subject obviation also occurs with plural/dual subjects, but additional considerations apply when singular matrix subjects co-occur with plural/dual embedded subjects. The restriction then occurs

- (15) *Rekel si_i, da si pomagaj_i!
 said.M AUX.2 that self.DAT help-IMP.(2)
 int.: ‘**You**_i said **you**_i should help yourself!’

Just as with the “ban on imperative questions”, the banned constructions can be felicitously paraphrased; e.g. subject obviation is absent with *modal+infinitive* constructions corresponding to the banned imperative/directive subjunctive.⁸

- (16) CONTEXT: *I say ‘Exercise more!’ to myself in the mirror. Later I can report:*
 a. *Rekel sem_i, da naj več telovadim_i! (obviation)
 said.M AUX.1 that SUB more exercise.1
 a’. Rekel sem_i, da moram_i več telovadit! (no obviation)
 said.M AUX.1 that should.1 more exercise.INF
 ‘**I**_i said **I**_i should exercise more.’

2.2 Matrix subject obviation

I will suggest that subject obviation is in fact not limited to embedded clauses, and that it should be viewed more generally as the inability of the subject of directives to refer to the attitude holder (see also Stegovec 2016).⁹ This take on subject obviation leads us to expect that it has an equivalent in matrix clauses, and I argue that it does.

Recall that imperatives and directive subjunctives are in complementary distribution with respect to the person of the subject, which is also the case in matrix clauses. However, apart from this, there is a gap in possible subjects that can be observed when we look at matrix directives together as a whole. Excluding questions, the subject of a directive cannot refer to (just) the speaker. That is, the subject can never be 1P singular or 1P exclusive (this is illustrated in Table 1).¹⁰ Note that this gap

with distributive plurals/duals and not with collective ones (see Stegovec 2016 regarding how this relates to Safir’s 2004 observation concerning distributive/collective plurals and binding restrictions).

⁸ Interestingly, (16a’) improves markedly when the “addressee” in the mirror is made explicit. That is, when it is expressed in the matrix clause by a dative reflexive clitic co-referential with the subject:

- (i) ?Rekel sem_i si_i, da naj več telovadim_i!
 said.M AUX.1 self.DAT that SUB more exercise.1
 ‘**I**_i said to **myself**_i **I**_i should exercise more.’

This may be because subject obviation only seems to apply to *de se* embedded attitudes (see Schlenker 2005a; Szabolcsi 2010; Zu 2016), since it is my intuition that subject obviation is voided in (1) only if the “directed entity” is interpreted as the speaker’s reflection and not when the speaker self-identifies with it. See also Section 3.3 regarding self-ascription in directives and Stegovec 2016 for other non-*de se* contexts in Slovenian where subject obviation is lifted.

⁹ See Zu 2016 for a similar point based on the *conjunct-disjunct marking* alternation in Newari.

¹⁰ Crucially, 1P inclusive subjects are possible in matrix contexts just as collective plural/dual subjects

<i>Help!</i>	SINGULAR	DUAL	PLURAL
*1P (excl.)	*naj pomaga-m	*naj pomaga-va	*naj pomaga-mo
1P+2P (incl.)	IMPOSSIBLE	pomaga- j -va	pomaga- j -mo
2P	pomaga- j	pomaga- j -ta	pomaga- j -te
3P	naj pomaga	naj pomaga-ta	naj pomaga-jo

Table 1 Subject gaps in directives — non-questions

<i>Q + Help!?</i>	SINGULAR	DUAL	PLURAL
1P (excl.)	naj pomaga-m?	naj pomaga-va?	naj pomaga-mo?
*1P+2P (incl.)	IMPOSSIBLE	*pomaga- j -va?	*pomaga- j -mo?
*2P	*pomaga- j ?	*pomaga- j -ta?	*pomaga- j -te
3P	naj pomaga?	naj pomaga-ta?	naj pomaga-jo?

Table 2 Subject gaps in directives — questions

is not observed with embedded directives (cf. (11), where the directive subjunctive has a 1P singular subject). In contrast, when directives are used in questions, the subject may be 1P singular or 1P exclusive, but it may never be 2P or 1P inclusive: the subject cannot refer to the addressee (this is illustrated in Table 2).

The 2P gap in questions is essentially what was described above as the “ban on imperative questions”, illustrated again in (17a). But directives in general are not banned in questions, as evidenced by the directive subjunctive in (17b).

- (17) a. ***Pomaga-j** mu?
 help-IMP-2 3.M.DAT
 ‘Should you help him?’
 b. **Naj** mu pomagam?
 SUB 3.M.DAT help.1
 ‘Should I help him?’

What is important is that, while keeping the subjects constant, the availability of the two kinds of directives is reversed in non-questions, as illustrated in (18).

- (18) a. **Pomaga-j** mu!
 help-IMP-2 3.M.DAT
 ‘Help him!’
 b. ***Naj** mu pomagam!
 SUB 3.M.DAT help.1
 int.: ‘I should help him!’

I propose that these matrix subject gaps in directives and the traditional subject obviation are manifestations of the same ban against subjects referring to the attitude

are in embedded contexts (see footnote 7). As observed by [Schlenker \(2005b\)](#), 1P seems to tolerate partial co-reference more readily than other persons, and in [Stegovec 2016](#) I suggest that 1P inclusive subjects of imperatives (“exhortatives”) in particular seem to require a collective interpretation.

holder, a *Generalized Subject Obviation*. The attitude holder in non-questions is the speaker, so subjects that refer to the speaker (1P.SG/excl.) are excluded. Conversely, the attitude holder in questions is the addressee, so subjects that refer to the addressee (2P/1P.incl.) are excluded. If this view is correct, a separate mechanism banning imperative questions like (17a) is not needed. As discussed in Section 4, this can also explain why imperatives are allowed in scope marking questions in Slovenian.

Before proceeding to derive this restriction, let me flash out a bit more the logic behind the idea that the putative “ban on imperative questions” is merely the result of Generalized Subject Obviation. In Slovenian, imperatives must have 2P/1P inclusive subjects that refer to (groups including) the addressee, and in questions the attitude holder is the addressee. Therefore, if Generalized Subject Obviation holds, imperatives specifically cannot be used in questions because their subject will always refer to (a group that includes) the addressee, and the attitude holder in questions is also the addressee. This extends also to other languages, since as far as I am aware, person based complementary distribution between imperatives and other directives is always such that imperatives are required either for only 2P subjects or for both 2P and 1P inclusive subjects. The account, however, also makes the stronger prediction that even without the complementary distribution, 2P and 1P inclusive subjects will be excluded with any kind of directive used in a question.

The open question now is what exactly is the special property of directives that makes them give rise to subject obviation.¹¹ As I already noted in the introduction, something must be special about both imperatives (more generally directives) and certain questions which makes sentences like (17a) impossible. In the following section I will first propose that what makes directives special is that they semantically and syntactically encode the perspective of the attitude holder. Following that, I will show how changing the attitude holder interacts with this property, focusing on how the addressee comes to be the attitude holder specifically in matrix information seeking questions and why this does not take place in scope marking questions.

3 Deriving “the ban”

3.1 How are directive clauses special?

An imperative cannot be “denied” by its speaker. In other words, *distancing* oneself from a Directive Speech Act is impossible (see also Kaufmann 2012; Condoravdi & Lauer 2012; Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015). This is illustrated with the Slovenian example in (19), where the imperative is followed up by the speaker’s “denial” of his or her original direction, resulting in the whole utterance being infelicitous.

¹¹ Note that from now on subject obviation means Generalized Subject Obviation unless stated otherwise.

- (19) #Pomaga-**j** mu! Ampak nočem, da mu pomagaš.
 help-IMP.(2) 3.M.DAT but not.want.1 that 3.M.DAT help.2
 ‘Help him! But I don’t want you to help him.’

Interestingly, the restriction changes for imperatives in speech reports (Stegovec & Kaufmann 2015). Distancing is then allowed for the speaker in the actual context (= $S_{@}$), as in (20a), but not for the original speaker (= S_1), as shown in (20b).¹²

- (20) Rekel je_i, da mu pomaga-**j**, ...
 said.M AUX.3 that 3.M.DAT help-IMP.(2) ...
 ‘He_i said you should help him ...’
- a. ... ampak nočem, da mu pomagaš
 ... but not.want.1 that 3.M.DAT help.2
 ‘... but I don’t want you to help him.’
- b. # ... ampak da noče_i, da mu pomagaš
 ... but that not.want.3 that 3.M.DAT help.2
 ‘... but that he_i doesn’t want you to help him.’

Similarly, an imperative where $S_{@}$ attempts to ensure P (or $P!$) cannot be followed immediately by one with which he or she attempts to ensure $\neg P$ (or $\neg P!$), as shown in (21). Once again, the restriction is different with an embedded imperative $P!$ like (22), which $S_{@}$ may follow up with $\neg P!$, as in (22a), while $S_{@}$ may not follow up with a report of S_1 previously expressing $\neg P!$, which is illustrated in (22b).¹³

- (21) #Pomaga-**j** mu! Ampak ne pomaga-**j** mu!
 help-IMP.(2) 3.M.DAT but not help-IMP.(2) 3.M.DAT
 ‘Help him! But don’t help him!’
- (22) Rekel je_i, da mu pomaga-**j**, ...
 said.M AUX.3 that 3.M.DAT help-IMP.(2) ...
 ‘He_i said you should help him ...’
- a. ... ampak ne pomaga-**j** mu!
 ... but not help-IMP.(2) 3.M.DAT
 ‘... but don’t help him.’

¹² (20a) and (20b) are not exact minimal pairs. This is because if the first complementizer in (20b) were left out this would yield a reading where $S_{@}$ is implying that S_1 ’s direction (= $P!$) was not truthful. Similarly, if the complementizer were to be added in the same position in (20a), the interpretation would have to be that S_1 also said “that $S_{@}$ does not want $P!$ ”. Therefore, in order to avoid these readings, the two continuations of (20) are phrased so that they only reflect $S_{@}$ ’s attitude towards $P!$.

¹³ Note that some Slovenian speakers do not allow negative perfective imperatives, which they must replace with “surrogate” infinitive forms (cf. Zanuttini 1997). For those speakers, the judgments are the same when the *negation+infinitive* form is used in examples comparable to (21) and (22).

- b. # ... ampak da mu ne pomaga-j.
 ... but that 3.M.DAT not help-IMP.(2)
 ‘... but that you shouldn’t help him.’

Therefore, while distancing by the actual speaker is impossible in matrix imperatives, it is possible with embedded imperatives. However, with the latter distancing is impossible for the original speaker, who is referred to by the matrix subject. Note that, just as with subject obviation, we can generalize this to a ban on distancing by the attitude holder. Crucially, as shown in Stegovec 2016 (but left out here in the interest of space), directive subjunctives pattern the same in this regard.

This kind of ban on distancing is not only present with directives. It is also present with modal constructions when used performatively (see Condoravdi & Lauer 2012). But modal constructions differ from directives in that the former can, but need not to, be used performatively. This contrasts with directives, which must be used performatively (more on this in Section 3.2). Consequently, despite the specification of the source of the direction, the imperative in (23a) does not allow speaker distancing. Contrast this with (23b), where distancing is possible under the reading where the speaker disagrees with the recipe. This is even easier in (23c), where the passive seems to block a directive interpretation of the first sentence.

- (23) a. According to the recipe, put in the peppers now.
 #But I don’t think you should do that.
 b. According to the recipe, you have to put in the peppers now.
 (#)But I don’t think you should do that.
 c. According to the recipe, the peppers have to be put in now.
 But I don’t think you should do that.

I will propose that this contrast in the availability of distancing is due to the fact that the semantic component of imperatives (and directives in general) involves a modal explicitly anchored to the attitude holder. Furthermore, I will argue that the special kind of modal operator that is required for this kind of explicit anchoring to attitude holders is also the source of subject obviation and is therefore also the reason why imperatives are impossible in matrix information seeking questions.

3.2 Centered modal operators & perspectival PROs

In my analysis I will build on the so called *performative modal* approach to imperative semantics, as developed in Kaufmann 2012. Under this view the semantic contribution of imperatives comes down to a modal operator (OP_{Imp}) whose ‘at-issue’ meaning is that of a modal (à la Kratzer 1981, 2012), summarized in (24).

$$(24) \quad \llbracket OP_{Imp} \rrbracket^c = \llbracket must \rrbracket^c = \lambda f . \lambda g . \lambda p . \lambda w . (\forall w' \in O(f, g, w)) [p(w')]$$

- a. f = the modal base (the body of information)
- b. g = the ordering source (criteria for comparing worlds compliant with f)
- c. where $O(f, g, w)$ is defined as the set of worlds conforming to f at w (i.e., in $\bigcap f(w)$) that are the best according to g at w .

OP_{Imp} therefore quantifies over possible worlds just like its modal verb counterpart, whereas their differences in use and distribution come strictly from an additional presuppositional meaning component which restricts their felicitous use to contexts where their modal declarative equivalents can be used performatively.

What will matter most for the analysis I entertain here are the *conversational backgrounds* (Kratzer 1981) on which the meaning of the modal depends on. With a regular modal, these are functions from worlds to sets of propositions: the *modal base* (f) and *ordering source* (g). The first yields a (necessarily consistent) body of information, and the second induces an ordering among the worlds that comply with the first (and can be inconsistent). I propose that, unlike regular modal constructions, directives involve a special kind of modal — the *directive operator* (OP_{Dir}), whose denotation employs a special kind of conversational backgrounds that explicitly encode an individual’s perspective. The denotation of OP_{Dir} is given in (25).

$$(25) \quad \llbracket OP_{Dir} \rrbracket^c = \lambda f . \lambda g . \lambda p . \lambda x . \lambda w . (\forall w' \in O(f_x, g_x, w)) [p(w')]$$

The only difference between (24) and (25) is in that the latter directly encodes the attitude holder’s preference via the added type e variable restricting the choice of conversational backgrounds. This variable comes to be bound by the attitude holder by means discussed in the next section, resulting in the modal base and ordering source of OP_{Dir} becoming “centered” to the same entity (x), hence: *centered conversational backgrounds*. The contribution of the modal base and ordering source in OP_{Dir} in relation to x is summarized in (26) (cf. the plain modal in (24)).

- (26)
- a. *Centered modal base*:
 f_x = the body of information available to x
 - b. *Centered ordering source*:
 g_x = criteria for comparing worlds compliant with f_x and *endorsed* by x
 - c. where $O(w, f_x, g_x)$ is defined as the set of worlds conforming to f_x at w that are best according to g_x at w .

This added variable does not only encode the perspective of the attitude holder, it is indirectly also the trigger for the subject obviation effect. In order for the x variable to receive a denotation, OP_{Dir} must combine with a type e element. I propose that in directives that give rise to subject obviation, this role is filled by a “*perspectival PRO*”, which combines with the phrase projected by OP_{Dir} in the syntax.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Section 4.1 for a brief discussion on whether or not other type e elements may fill this role.

3.3 Subject obviation/the ban as Condition B

I follow the line of approaches to subject obviation that treat it as a syntactic binding restriction (see Picallo 1985; Kempchinsky 1986, 2009; Rizzi 1990; Progovac 1993; Bianchi 2001).¹⁵ Specifically, I propose that the perspectival *PRO*, required due to OP_{Dir} (see above), resides in the same binding domain as the subject. Therefore, pronominal subjects of directives co-referential with the c-commanding perspectival *PRO* are excluded by Condition B (more on this below). In embedded contexts, the perspectival *PRO* is the proxy for the matrix subject, which “binds” it just like it “binds” regular argumental *PRO* in subject control infinitives, so the ban on co-reference between perspectival *PRO* and the subject of the directive is effectively a ban on co-reference between the matrix and embedded subject. I use scare quotes with “binding” because I will argue that syntactic binding via c-command is in fact not the mechanism by which *PRO* becomes co-referential with the matrix subject, but that the relevant relation is *self-ascription* (see Lewis 1979; Chierchia 1987; Pearson 2012, 2016). This will be crucial with the discussion of subject obviation in matrix clauses and scope marking questions. However, for the sake of exposition, I continue to use binding informally to refer to this relation.

Let us take a closer look at how subject obviation arises. In control infinitives like (27a), an object pronoun of the infinitive clause cannot be co-referential with the *PRO* subject due to Condition B. However, in a directive, *PRO* and the subject are two distinct elements, so Condition B applies to the latter, as in (27b).

- (27) a. *He_i promised [*PRO*_i to shave him_i]. (infinitive + Condition B)
-
-
- b. *He_i said [that *PRO*_i *OP*_i [*pro*_i help him]]. (directive + Condition B)

It is crucial that the extra structure containing OP_{Dir} and the perspectival *PRO* is only present in directives (or other subject obviation yielding clauses),¹⁶ and

¹⁵ The other main alternative to Subject Obviation is the so called competition approach (see Bouchard 1982; Farkas 1992; Schlenker 2005a; Szabolcsi 2010; Zu 2016), where co-referring subjects are disallowed with subjunctives and other similar constructions due to the existence of a competing construction which is dedicated explicitly to co-referring subjects (typically control infinitives). The latter thus blocks the former from being used specifically in the context of co-referring matrix and embedded subjects (more exactly *de se* attitudes; see below). Due to reasons of space, I cannot go into detail about why I do not adopt such an approach. But in short, directives are never in competition with infinitive clauses in Slovenian, as the two never occur in the same syntactic contexts. In other words, they are never selected as complements by the same attitude verbs, so one cannot block the use of the other. See Stegovec 2016 for a more detailed discussion.

¹⁶ This extra structure above the subject but below the complementizer can be thought of in terms of OP_{Dir} being the head of a MoodP projection above TP and below CP (see Stegovec 2016).

that perspectival *PRO* and subject *pro* are in the same binding domain, whereas perspectival *PRO* and the object are not (in contrast with infinitival *PRO* subjects).¹⁷

The principle is the same with subject obviation in matrix clauses. However, the means by which perspectival *PRO* comes to be bound differ slightly. Because there is no embedding clause, the perspectival *PRO* is instead “bound” by means of *attitude operators* (Pearson 2012), causing *PRO* to refer to the speaker (= 1) in non-questions (via COMMIT) and the addressee (= 2) in questions (via ASK).¹⁸ This results in non-question directives disallowing 1P.excl. subjects, as shown in (28a), and directives in questions disallowing 2P/1P.incl. subjects, as shown in (28b).

- (28) a. *[COMMIT [*PRO*₁ OP₁ [*pro*₁ leave]]] (non-question)
 ↓ speaker ↑ ⌈ X Condition B ⌋
 b. *[ASK [Q [*PRO*₂ OP₂ [*pro*₂ leave]]]] (question)
 ↓ addressee ↑ ⌈ X Condition B ⌋

Recall once again that directives surface as imperatives in Slovenian only with subjects that refer to either the addressee or a group of people including the addressee (that means 2P and 1P inclusive subjects). This in turn means that (28b) will always apply with imperatives in questions. As I have already argued above, this effectively bans the use of imperatives in matrix questions. However, it also predicts that the ban can be voided even in questions should the ASK operator be absent, since then the perspectival *PRO* may also refer to entities other than the addressee. This is, in fact, what I will argue is the case in scope marking questions.

In order to elaborate on the nature of the attitudinal operators COMMIT and ASK, I must first discuss the notion of self-ascription. According to an influential family of approaches to control (see, among others, Lewis 1979; Chierchia 1987; Pearson 2012, 2016) the relation between a matrix subject and a *PRO* subject of an embedded infinitive amounts to self-ascription. Under this view of control, “co-reference” between the attitude holder (matrix subject) and *PRO* results from attitude verbs/operators quantifying over sets of world-individual pairs or *centered worlds*. For instance, the relevant set for belief attitudes is the set of *doxastic alternatives*:

¹⁷ The exact nature of the domains is not crucial for the account as long as the CP comprises of two binding domains: one containing the external and internal arguments, and the other containing the external argument and perspectival *PRO*. I suggest in Stegovec (2016) that this can be thought of in terms of Condition B being phase-bound, the two domains being the *v*P and the CP phase respectively (Chomsky 2000). The privileged status of the external argument as being in both binding domains can be attributed to its position at the edge of the *v*P phase which makes it visible from the CP phase.

¹⁸ Pearson’s (2012) original names for the two attitude operators are ASSERT and QUEST respectively. However, I renamed them here in order to avoid any confusion about whether ASSERT also necessarily implies an assertive speech act — it does not. This finer point was not crucial for Pearson, but for the matter at hand it is crucial to dissociate the attitude operators from any specific speech acts.

- (29) **Doxastic alternatives (belief).** $\text{Dox}_{x,w} = \{ \langle w', y \rangle : \text{it is compatible with what } x \text{ believes in } w \text{ for } x \text{ to be } y \text{ in } w' \}$

In the case of a control infinitive like (30), the subject *PRO* in CP2 receives a referent by virtue of the attitude verb ‘*expect*’ quantifying over $\text{Dox}_{x,w}$ (cf. (30a)). The *centered proposition* (or *property*) expressed by CP2 (cf. (30b)) thus becomes self-ascribed by the subject of the matrix attitude verb, in this case ‘*John*’ (cf. (30c)).¹⁹

- (30) $[_{CP1} \text{ John expects } [_{CP2} \text{ } PRO \text{ to become rich and famous }]]$.
- a. $\llbracket \text{expect} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda P_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \lambda x \lambda w. \forall \langle w', y \rangle [\langle w', y \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{x,w} \rightarrow P(y)(w')]$
 - b. $\llbracket \text{CP2} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda x \lambda w. x \text{ becomes rich and famous in } w$
 - c. $\llbracket \text{CP1} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda w. \forall \langle w', y \rangle [\langle w', y \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{\text{John},w} \rightarrow y \text{ becomes rich and famous in } w']$ (based on Pearson 2016: 7)

I suggest that perspectival *PRO* in embedded directives receives its denotation essentially the same way. The only differences are that the particular attitude verbs quantifying over the embedded proposition are different and the fact that *PRO* only serves to center the conversational backgrounds of OP_{Dir} and not the proposition expressed by the verb phrase. This also means that, just as subject *PRO* must be construed as *de se*, so must the perspectival *PRO*. That this is correct can be shown through a complicated “mistaken identity” scenario discussed in Stegovec (2016). For current purposes, it suffices to say that my analysis captures the intuition that the source of a Directive Speech Act must always also self-identify as such.²⁰

Turning now to matrix clauses. I follow Pearson (2012) in also treating matrix clauses as centered propositions dominated by attitude operators. These are crucially not “abstract” attitude verbs (cf. *performative hypothesis*; Ross 1970), but merely introduce a definedness condition ensuring that the propositions are centered to the speaker in the scope of COMMIT (31) and the addressee in the scope of ASK (32).

- (31) $\llbracket \text{COMMIT} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda P_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} : \forall \langle w', y \rangle [\langle w', y \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{\text{speaker}(c), \text{world}(c)} \rightarrow P(y)(w')] . P$
- (32) $\llbracket \text{ASK} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda Q_{\langle \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle, t \rangle} : \forall P [P \in Q \rightarrow \exists \langle w, x \rangle [\langle w, x \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{\text{spkr}(c), \text{wrld}(c)} \wedge \forall \langle w', y \rangle [\langle w', y \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{\text{addressee}(c), w} \rightarrow P(y)(w')]]] . Q$

As you may have noticed, ASK does not combine directly with a centered proposition ($= P$) like COMMIT. It combines instead with a set of centered propositions ($= Q$). This ensures that ASK may only combine with questions, which I assume are sets of centered propositions resulting from a Q operator (cf. (28b)); Q takes the centered proposition expressed by a clause and returns a set of centered propositions.

19 I systematically ignore any reference to tense in the discussion of self-ascription (also with the attitude operators below) for ease of exposition and since it is not relevant for the discussion at hand.

20 See also footnote 8 regarding subject obviation and (non-) *de se* attitudes.

The consequence of the two attitudinal operators when combined with a directive is that a non-question P receives an interpretation only when the denotation of perspectival PRO is the speaker (due to COMMIT; see (31)), whereas a question Q receives an interpretation only when the denotation of PRO is the addressee (due to ASK; see (32)). In other words, the perspectival PRO of a directive clause may only refer to the speaker in non-questions and to the addressee in questions, which in turn yields the subject obviation pattern illustrated above in (28). Following the reasoning used above, this then also derives the absence of matrix imperative questions, as they are predicted to always give rise to subject obviation. But what makes scope marking questions exempt from this restriction? I address this in the next section.

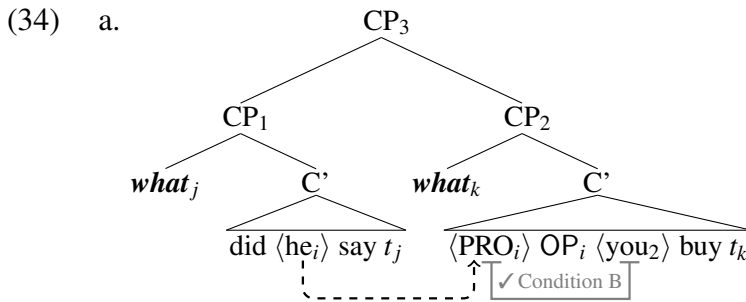
4 Directive clauses in scope marking questions

I adopt an *indirect dependency* view of scope marking questions following Dayal (1993, 2016), where the two questions in a scope marking sequence are not in a syntactic subordination relation, but combine at the level of semantics through standard functional application at the level of sets of (centered) propositions.

Recall that in Slovenian scope marking questions like (8a') (repeated as (33)) allow an imperative in the second question. Crucially, the second question is felicitous despite having the same syntax as the infelicitous matrix imperative questions.

- (33) **Kaj** je_i rekel? **Kaj** kupi? [= (8a')]
 what AUX.3 said.M what buy.IMP.(2)
 ‘What did he say? What should you buy?’

I argue that sequences like (33) do not involve clause embedding in the traditional sense, but that the two question CPs are adjoined to each other in the manner shown in (34a), with CP₁ quantifying over CP₂, as in (34b) (following Dayal 1993, 2016).



b. $\llbracket \text{CP}_3 \rrbracket = \lambda T_{\langle \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle, t \rangle} \cdot \llbracket \text{CP}_1 \rrbracket (\llbracket \text{CP}_2 \rrbracket)$

Without going into details about the semantics of questions (which would take us too far astray),²¹ the basic idea is that the configuration in (34a) has more in common

21 See Dayal 2016: Ch. 2 for a good brief overview of the semantics of scope marking questions in

semantically with embedded questions than with matrix ones, despite the lack of traditional clause embedding. Consider the verb ‘say’ in (33), which I assume takes centered propositions as complements. In (34a), CP₁ is a question where the sought after information is a centered proposition (roughly: ‘*What is the $P_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}$ such that he said it*’), so the question involves quantification over centered propositions much like a clause embedding ‘say’ would (see above). Following Dayal (2016), this means that the quantified over variable has a covert restriction ($= T$) analogous to the individual variables that ‘*what/who*’ bind in a question like CP₂. Since the quantification is over variables of type $\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle$, the restriction itself is a set of centered propositions: $T_{\langle \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle, t \rangle}$. What this means is that in effect CP₃ denotes only those centered propositions that the subject of CP₁ ($= he_i$) said and are in the denotation of CP₂. In other words, the subject of CP₁ self-identifies with the perspectival *PRO* in CP₂ just as it does in embedded directives, and unlike in matrix questions, where ASK causes *PRO* to obligatorily refer to the addressee.

This analysis thus correctly predicts that imperatives can occur in scope marking questions; the perspectival *PRO* does not have to refer to the addressee and give rise to subject obviation with 2P and 1P inclusive subjects. Note also that, just as with matrix clauses, the adoption of self-ascription over syntactic binding is crucial, as there is no c-command relation between the subject of CP₁ and *PRO* in CP₂.

Another thing the analysis accounts for is the fact that subject obviation is actually active in scope marking questions. The subject of the first question must self-identify with a perspectival *PRO* in the second question, so the subject obviation pattern is predicted to be identical to that of embedded directives: the subjects of the two questions cannot co-refer. This is, in fact, the pattern we observe. In (35a), the subject in the first question and the subject of the directive subjunctive cannot co-refer. Similarly in (35b), the imperative is banned in the second question because the subject of the first question is 2P — replicating the matrix question restriction.

- (35) a. Kaj je_i rekel? Kaj naj kupi_{k,*i}? [cf. (14)]
 what AUX.3 said.M what SUB buy.3
 ‘What did he_i say? What should he_{k,*i} buy?’
- b. *Kaj si_i rekel? Kaj kupi_i? [cf. (15)]
 what AUX.2 said.M what buy.IMP.(2)
 ‘What did **you** say? What should **you** buy?’

Reducing the “ban on imperative questions” to subject obviation therefore correctly accounts not only for the fact that imperatives are banned in matrix questions, but also for the fact that they are allowed in scope marking questions. The different restriction patterns arise as a conspiracy of the semantic and syntactic requirements

relation to broader issues concerning the semantics of questions; much of this section is based on it.

introduced by OP_{Dir} , the source of “directive semantics” in directives, and the nature of the quantification over the centered proposition denoted by the directive clause.

4.1 Open questions about cross-linguistic variation

The discussion of the analysis so far focused exclusively on Slovenian, but the lack of imperatives in questions seems to be a universal or close to universal property of language. As noted above, it follows from the proposed analysis that any language with the kind of directive clause structure I argued for should have the same subject obviation patterns. In languages where the imperative paradigm covers 2P and 1P inclusive subjects, the pattern is predicted to be the same as in Slovenian. However, even when a directive does not surface as an imperative it should give rise to subject obviation. This can be observed in Romance languages, where imperatives cannot appear in embedded contexts, so they surface as subjunctives instead, crucially retaining the subject obviation effect (see [Kempchinsky 1986, 2009](#)). So the strong prediction, to be tested, is whether this is universally true, and whether the matrix version of subject obviation that gives rise to the apparent ban on imperative questions is also maintained when the use of an imperative is blocked in a similar fashion.

The next question is whether there is variation in terms of what kind of type e element combines with OP_{Dir} . So far we have seen the perspectival *PRO* fulfill this role, but there is no semantic requirement that limits the type e expression to *PRO*, so any such requirement must be syntactic in nature. This also means that it is conceivably subject to cross-linguistic variation. For example, if the subject of the directive was allowed to move to OP_{Dir} instead, there would be no subject obviation and OP_{Dir} would be centered to the individual denoted by the subject. This could be what goes on in Balkan-style embedded subjunctives, which show no subject obviation effects and pattern more with control infinitives (see [Quer 2006: 674–676](#)). Similarly, extending further to the realm of matrix directives, this option may also be required for Korean directives (*jussives* in the terminology of [Zanuttini, Pak & Portner 2012](#)); if imperatives, exhortatives, and promissives form a natural class, as suggested by [Zanuttini et al. \(2012\)](#), then promissives are an exception to the ban on 1P exclusive subjects that results from subject obviation. Crucially, the pattern is paralleled in embedded contexts, so it could be that in Korean promissives differ from other directives in that they involve subject-to- OP_{Dir} movement as opposed to a perspectival *PRO* (see also [Stegovec 2016](#)). Note that if such variation exists, it would result in the current approach only from morpho-syntactic parameterization.

Finally, if the proposed analysis of imperatives in scope marking questions is correct, why do all languages not pattern with Slovenian? It is possible that allowing embedded imperatives is somehow a prerequisite for allowing imperatives in scope marking questions. Interestingly, the otherwise very similar Slovenian

and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian seem to differ in terms of imperatives in that only the former allows embedded imperatives, but also in that only the former allows imperatives in scope marking questions. This connection would, of course, have to be checked cross-linguistically, but it is an interesting idea to entertain going forward, given the implications it may have for the theory of scope marking questions.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that there is no “ban on imperative questions” resulting from the incompatibility of clause types. This was mainly based on the observation that imperatives are allowed in Slovenian even in true information seeking questions, specifically in scope marking questions. Building on this, I proposed an alternative analysis that attributes the absence of imperatives in regular matrix questions to a matrix version of subject obviation. This analysis not only reduces the ban to an independent restriction associated with imperatives, and more generally directive clauses, but also correctly predicts the absence of the ban in scope marking questions, given an indirect dependency analysis of scope marking (Dayal 1993, 2016).

Going beyond the Slovenian facts, this analysis also has implications concerning cross-linguistic variation in directives, and perhaps more importantly the theory of clause types itself. In the proposed analysis, the only relevant distinction between questions and other types of clauses is arguably their differing semantic types: sets of (centered) propositions, and (centered) propositions respectively. Similarly, in the realm of mood and modality, the crucial difference between directives (and any other subject obviation yielding clauses) and plain modals also boils down to a difference in semantic type: modals with centered conversational backgrounds versus plain ones. It would be interesting to explore whether this kind of variation in semantic type classes could be extended beyond the cases that were discussed in this paper.

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